

Biaxially Oriented Polypropylene Metallized Film for Packaging

Field of Invention

This invention relates to a metallized polypropylene film exhibiting superior tensile properties, resulting in superior formed bag barrier properties whereby gas and moisture barrier properties are maintained despite high tensions and stresses caused by packaging machinery.

This film has excellent oxygen and moisture barrier, and superior formed bag oxygen and moisture barrier properties.

Background of Invention

A biaxially oriented polypropylene metallized film used for packaging applications often performs multiple functions. It must perform in a lamination to provide light, moisture, and oxygen barrier for gas-flush applications; it must provide a heat sealable inner layer for bag forming and sealing; and it must maintain sufficient oxygen and moisture barrier properties *after* bag-forming and filling in order to retain the benefits of gas-flushing salty snacks such as potato chips.

Typical metallized films used in vertical-form-fill-seal (VFFS) bag makers often demonstrate excellent barrier properties when in un laminated or laminated form prior to bag-making. However, during the process of bag-forming, due to the wide variety of forming collars used, bag sizes, filling speeds, and machine tensions employed, the laminated structure can be stretched in the machine direction anywhere from 5 – 10% beyond the normal dimension of the lamination. This elongation during bag-forming can fracture or crack the metal layer of the metallized film, causing a loss of barrier properties, particularly oxygen barrier. Thus, what may have been a metallized film lamination with excellent gas barrier properties prior to bag-forming, may actually result in formed and filled bags with poor gas barrier, thus losing the benefits of the originally designed high gas barrier film.

Summary of the Invention

The objective of this invention is to solve the aforesaid problems of conventional biaxially oriented polypropylene (BOPP) metallized films by providing a novel BOPP metallized film with exceptionally high tensile properties which in turn, provides greater resistance to the tensions and forces that can be exerted by typical packaging machines. This will result in a metallized high barrier packaging film with excellent formed bag barrier properties. In addition, the film can also offer excellent sealability or slip properties.

According to this invention, the above objective is achieved by a propylene polymer film comprising of at least a single layer extruded film and a vapor-deposited metal layer, with said extruded propylene polymer film exhibiting machine direction tensile properties that are in the range of about 350,000 to about 400,000 psi or higher Young's modulus, about 110% or lower elongation *at break* (% strain at ultimate), and 27,000 to 30,000 psi or higher tensile strength (stress at ultimate). Such a metallized BOPP film exhibiting these superior tensile properties in the machine direction demonstrates superior resistance to the machine direction stresses and tensions exerted upon it from packaging machines. This superior machine direction resistance then translates into superior barrier properties after bag-forming.

The metallizing surface of said layer is also modified by treatment with a corona discharge or flame treatment method to enhance adhesion and wettability of the vapor-deposited metal; the surface opposite said treated metallizing surface can be treated or left untreated as desired. Additionally, other polyolefin-based resin layers may be coextruded with the primary propylene polymer film layer to enhance metallizing properties and/or, other layers coextruded opposite the metallizing surface to provide sealability or as a winding surface whose surface may also be modified with a corona discharge or flame treatment method to make it suitable for laminating or converter applied adhesives and inks.

Detailed Description of the Invention

In one embodiment of the invention the laminate film comprises: a polyolefin resin layer, preferably a resin containing polypropylene; a heat sealable layer or a non-heat sealable, winding

layer; and a metal layer. The polyolefin resin layer will have a thickness of about 6 to 40 μm thick. The polyolefin resin layer is corona discharge or flame treated, and the metal layer deposited on the treated resin layer.

The metal layer is preferably a vapor deposited metal, more preferably vapor deposited aluminum. The metal layer shall have a thickness between about 5 and about 100 nm, preferably between about 20 and about 80 nm, more preferably between about 30 and about 70 nm; and an optical density between about 1.5 and about 5.0, preferably between about 2.0 and about 4.0, more preferably between about 2.4 and about 3.2.

The heat sealable layer may contain an anti-blocking agent and/or slip additives for good machinability and a low coefficient of friction in about 0.05 – about 0.5% by weight of the heat-sealable layer. The heat sealable layer preferably comprise a ternary ethylene-propylene-butene copolymer. If the invention comprises a non-heat sealable, winding layer, this layer comprises a crystalline polypropylene or a matte layer of a block copolymer blend of polypropylene and one or more other polymers whose surface is roughened during the film formation step so as to produce a matte finish on the winding layer. Preferably, the surface of the winding layer is corona discharge- or flame-treated to provide a functional surface for lamination or coating with adhesives and/or inks.

The polyolefin resin is coextruded with the heat sealable layer which has a thickness between about 0.2 and about 5 μm , preferably between about 0.6 and about 3 μm , and more preferably between about 0.8 and about 1.5 μm . The two layer laminate sheet is cast onto a cooling drum whose surface temperature is controlled between about 20 °C and about 60 °C to solidify the non-oriented laminate sheet.

The non-oriented laminate sheet is stretched in the longitudinal (machine) direction at about 130 to 180°C at a stretching ratio of preferably about a minimum of 5.5 to about 10 times the original length, and more preferably between about 6 and about 7 times the original length. The sheet is also stretched in the transverse direction at about 130 to about 180°C at a stretch ratio of about 7 to about 12 times the original length and then heat set to give a biaxially oriented sheet. The superior machine direction tensile properties of the biaxially oriented polypropylene

film is imparted by said high machine direction stretching ratios of about 5.5 or greater. The biaxially oriented film has a total thickness between about 6 and about 40 μm , preferably between about 10 and about 20 μm , and most preferably between about 12 and about 18 μm . The stretching process itself may be done by either sequential orientation (machine direction stretching followed by transverse stretching), or by simultaneous orientation (machine and transverse direction stretching performed simultaneously). For practical purposes and high productivity of producing BOPP films with machine direction stretch ratios of minimum 5.5 and greater, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the simultaneous orientation process equipment as developed by Bruckner Maschinenbau GmbH's (LISIM® technology), aids greatly in the production of such highly oriented BOPP coextruded films.

The surface of the polyolefin resin layer of the biaxially oriented laminate film is subjected to a corona discharge or flame treatment. The treated laminate sheet is then wound into a roll. The roll is placed in a metallizing chamber and the metal is vapor-deposited on the treated polyolefin resin layer surface. The metal film may include titanium, vanadium, chromium, manganese, iron, cobalt, nickel, copper, zinc, aluminum, gold, or palladium, the preferred being aluminum. The metallized film is then tested for oxygen and moisture permeability, optical density, metal adhesion, and film tensile properties, and barrier durability.

This invention will be better understood with reference to the following examples, which are intended to illustrate specific embodiments within the overall scope of the invention but not to limit its scope, which is defined in the appended claims.

Example 1

One hundred parts by weight of a crystalline propylene homopolymer resin; 0.0002 parts by weight of a sodium calcium aluminosilicate powder or an amorphous silica having a mean particle diameter of 3 μm , were blended together. The mixture was then extruded and biaxially oriented to form a polyolefin film of 1 μm thickness. This polyolefin layer was coextruded and biaxially oriented with a propylene homopolymer core layer having a thickness 15 μm , and a heat sealable layer opposite the first resin layer having a thickness 1.5 μm . The three layer film was coextruded so as to form a biaxially oriented film having a total thickness of 17.5 μm . The heat

sealable layer comprised a ternary ethylene-propylene-butene copolymer containing 4000 ppm of a crosslinked silicone polymer of mean particle diameter of 2 μm by weight of the heat sealable layer. The three-layer film was oriented in the machine direction at 6.5 times its original length and oriented in the transverse direction at 7.5 times its original width. The film was then flame-treated on the first propylene homopolymer layer (the metallizing surface) and wound in roll form. The roll was then metallized by vapor-deposition of aluminum onto the flame-treated surface to an optical density of 2.4. The metallized laminate film was then tested for oxygen and moisture permeability, tensile properties, optical density, metal adhesion, and film barrier durability.

Comparative Example 1

A process similar to Example 1 was repeated except that the film was oriented in the machine direction at 4.5 times its original length and oriented in the transverse direction at 8 times its original width. The results appear in Table 1 which follows.

Working Example I

The various properties in the above examples were measured by the following methods:

A) Oxygen transmission rate of the film was measured by using a Mocon Oxtran 2/20 unit substantially in accordance with ASTM D3985. In general, the preferred value was an average value equal to or less than 15.5 $\text{cc}/\text{m}^2/\text{day}$ with a maximum of 46.5 $\text{cc}/\text{m}^2/\text{day}$.

B) Moisture transmission rate of the film was measured by using a Mocon Permatran 3/31 unit measured substantially in accordance with ASTM F1249. In general, the preferred value was an average value equal to or less than 0.155 $\text{g}/\text{m}^2/\text{day}$ with a maximum of 0.69 $\text{g}/\text{m}^2/\text{day}$.

C) Optical density was measured using a Tobias Associates model TBX transmission densitometer. Optical density is defined as the amount of light reflected from the test specimen under specific conditions. Optical density is reported in terms of a logarithmic conversion. For example, a density of 0.00 indicates that 100% of the light falling on the sample is being reflected. A density of 1.00 indicates that 10% of the light is being reflected; 2.00 is equivalent to 1%, etc.

D) Metal adhesion was measured by adhering a strip of 1-inch wide 610 tape to the metallized surface of a single sheet of metallized film and removing the tape from the metallized surface. The amount of metal removed was rated qualitatively as follows:

4.0 = 0-5% metal removed

3.5 = 6-10% metal removed

3.0 = 11-20% metal removed

2.5 = 21-30% metal removed

2.0 = 31-50% metal removed

1.5 = 51-75% metal removed

1.0 = 76-100% metal removed

In general, preferred values ranged from 3.0 – 4.0.

E) Barrier durability of the film was measured by elongating test specimens with original dimensions of 10" long (MD) by 4.75" wide (TD) in an Instron Tensile tester at various elongation percentages up to 9 % elongation. The force to elongate the test specimens at each elongation percentage was recorded using the Instron Tensile tester's load cell. The elongated samples were then measured for barrier properties using Mocon Oxtran 2/20 or Permatran 3/31 units. In general, preferred values of O₂TR (oxygen transmission rate), which is a measurement of the permeation rate of oxygen through a substrate, would be equal or less than 46.5 cc/m²/day up to 9% elongation and MVTR (moisture vapor transmission rate), which is a measurement of the permeation rate of water vapor through a substrate, would be equal or less than 0.69 g/m²/day up to 9% elongation.

F) Tensile properties were measured in an Instron Tensile tester. The biaxially oriented films were tested in both the machine direction and transverse directions. Young's Modulus, Elongation (% strain at ultimate), and Tensile Strength (stress at ultimate) was tested substantially in accordance with ASTM D822.

The results of the foregoing examples ("Ex.") and comparative example ("CEX.") are shown in Table 1, and Figures 1 and 2.

TABLE I

Comparison of Machine Direction Tensile Properties

	<u>CEx. 1*</u>	<u>Ex. 1**</u>
MD Young's Modulus (psi)	332,692	400,227
MD Elongation (%)	185	107
MD Tensile Strength (psi)	24,191	30,181
Film Thickness (um)	17.5	17.5

* produced on
sequential
orientation

** produced on
simultaneous
orientation